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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA POLITICAL NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 20-25

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¶1. (SBU) Written in partnership with the Open Source Center's Pretoria Bureau, the POL newsletter is open to contributions from officers in the Embassy or in the Consulates who wish to highlight political trends. Contact Madeline Seidenstricker or Jonathan Smallridge for more information, or to make contributions. The newsletter also is available on the Political Section's blog, "A View from South Africa," found on intelink.gov.

Domestic News

COSATU Presses ANC for Ruling Alliance Summit

¶2. (U) At the annual Congress of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), COSATU General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi called for the withdrawal of a Green Paper on Strategic Planning tabled by the Minister in the Presidency Trevor Manuel. COSATU accused Manuel of over-stepping his authority and marginalizing ruling alliance members COSATU and the South African Communist Party (SACP). COSATU charged that the former finance minister's plans, if implemented, would make Manuel the country's de-facto Prime Minister. The African National Congress National Executive Committee (ANC NEC), which had previously endorsed the Green Paper, agreed to a ruling alliance (ANC-COSATU-SACP) summit to discuss the document. (The Times, September, 20, 2009)

Suspension of Local Officials Compounds Service Delivery Problems

¶3. (U) According to an analysis done by the Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs department, the mass suspension of top officials following a wave of service delivery protests has harmed service delivery. The analysis shows that the suspension of senior staffers without immediate replacement has affected service delivery targets in affected municipalities. Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs departmental spokesman Simphiwe Kunene told local media that on the basis of these findings, his department would provide experts and support to strengthen the capacities of all under staffed municipalities by December. (The Times, September, 25, 2009)

Defense Minister Appoints Military Service Commission; Bows to Pressure to Keep Military Unions

¶4. (U) Minister of Defense and Military Veterans Lindiwe Sisulu announced on September 21 the appointment of a ten-member Military Service Commission to regulate the conditions of service of all South African National Defense Force (SANDF) personnel. Sisulu announced that the Military Service Commission will be chaired by High Court Judge Ronnie Bosielo, who would assist in developing new military standards for salaries, recruitment, transfers, promotions and dismissals. Sisulu insisted that the commission would not replace military unions but would create a separate bargaining chamber for soldiers. Commission members include United Democratic Front Leader Bantu Holimisa, Freedom Front Plus MP Pieter Groenewald, and ANC MP Hlengiwe Mgabadel.

Controversial Judge Hlophe Fails to Secure Constitutional Court
Nomination

¶5. South Africa's Judicial Service Commission put an end to months of controversy and agonized debate on the politicization of the judiciary when it released its short list of candidate for the Constitutional Court. The name of Cape Judge President John Hlophe, accused of lobbying the court on behalf of then-ANC President Jacob Zuma, who then faced corruption charges, was not among the seven candidates recommended for appointment to South Africa's highest court (Pretoria News, September 22).

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International News

UNGA, G-20, Africa-South America Summit

¶6. (U) President Jacob Zuma, supported by International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Water and Environmental Affairs Minister, Buyelwa Sonjica, Health Minister, Aaron Motsoaledi and Home Affairs Minister, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Senior Government officials, led South Africa's delegation to the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York from September 21 - 25. Minister Nkoana Mashabane left New York to attend the Second Africa - South America Ministerial meeting in Venezuela on September 24 - 25, to be joined by President Zuma for the summit scheduled to take place from September 26 - 27. (DIRCO Briefing, September 24)

South Africa- Iran Ministerial Working Group

¶7. (U) DIRCO Deputy Minister Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim will lead a South African delegation to the fourth meeting of the SA- Iran

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Deputy Ministerial Working Group scheduled to take place on September 28 - 29. Ebrahim's visit comes within the context of South Africa's commitment to cooperation with Iran especially in trade and economic matters within the framework of South-South Cooperation. The fourth SA-Iran Ministerial Working Group meeting will discuss the following issues: bilateral and economic relations between two countries; developments in Africa and the Middle East and regional cooperation; human rights, social and health issues; international cooperation, trade and security. (DIRCO Briefing, September 25)

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